

IN MEMORIAM



Joseph V. McMullan. Courtesy of *The National Cyclopedic of American Biography*.

JOSEPH V. McMULLAN (1896-1973) Trustee of the Textile Museum 1948-1973

What a flood of memories wells up at the incidence of this name: the devoted son and brother who instinctively took over his duties as the one male member of the household too early left fatherless; the energetic technical expert inspecting factories and working out flow sheets; the eager student of rugs taking proud pleasure in his modest room of the family home so arranged that from bed he could handily reach any of his books stacked on various surrounding shelving; the keen-eyed enthusiast completely carried away in the enjoyment of rugs and other fine furnishings at museums and private collections; the paragon of filial piety who came to pay in soul-stirring sorrow the price of his love for his mother when in the course of nature she was taken from him; the practical man of affairs in an industrial world making a warmly welcomed visit to his firm's plant, and inspecting the fabrication of steel pipe; the budding collector eagerly listening to advice and suggestion, and meanwhile zealously training himself by haunting the galleries of dealers and auction houses; the cool, prudent head capable of resolutely tackling the financial problems of his own business, and of giving judicious, sharp-edged advice to his friends and associates; the

tireless detective, of a sort, pursuing the vicissitudes of an outstanding carpet from its first recording in some older ownership to its present location, and eventual availability; the gay, convivial companion at many a luncheon and dinner, and the life of the party on festive occasions; the seeker for knowledge absorbed in the texts and plates of his comprehensive library on the subject of rugs; consequently, the cautious but very rarely indecisive appraiser of rug values; the determined bidder at sales, muttering to himself, yet audibly to his nearby friend, "I must have that rug!"—and getting it; the liveliest member of the Hajji Baba Club, who was continually bringing in recent acquisitions for admiration and often heated discussion; the quiet donor, whose treasures one after another began to appear on the walls of the Metropolitan and other museums; the properly proud, loving husband, whose hearthsides, graced by a perfect hostess, came to be favorite resorts of an expanding circle; the magnanimous supporter, quite beyond public knowledge, of Asian studies, in which he took his Master's degree; the indefatigable attendant, and frequently participant, at a wide variety of international meetings of groups devoted to Oriental scholarship; the speaker with a kind of missionary zeal which took him far and wide to address those converted, or doomed to be converted, to a love of the art of rugs; the comrade of many travels by land, sea, and air, and ranging from our American West to the Russian borders of China; the academic colleague whose seminar on Islamic carpets was fortified by the immediate presence of pertinent examples; above all, the friend, not of a few but of many, ready with understanding, sympathy, and willingness to lend a helping hand; and always, unfathomably, JOE.

Such memories as these, along with too many others to be recounted here, give some faint inkling of what is gone. Yet how great the heritage left behind: owing to his foundation we have the Dilley-Damon Fund for Islamic Studies at Harvard and the Near Eastern Art Research Center in New York, both of which benefactions will long continue to bear fruit; outstanding among other publications on the subject is the magnificent book *Islamic Carpets*, which has already reached many other than its own readers through its use for subsequent cataloguing; and, quite dwarfing everything else, is the unequalled collection of rugs, now public property to be seen in various museums, principally the Metropolitan. It would be petty to speak of this collection merely in terms of its size, though, indeed, no one interested can fail to be impressed by its extent. To speak of it in terms of its material value would be the sort of thing felt by its collector to be repugnant, even offensive. In accordance with his intention the collection is only to be measured in terms of its artistic value. Within the range of availability the rugs were chosen by him on the basis of what beauty they had to offer. That the collection represents so many types, of varying dates and regions and social backgrounds, was the result of his conviction that each type represented had its peculiar, and individually valid, aesthetic value, a kind or quality of beauty of its own of which he approved; those types of which he disapproved are not represented. It seems impossible that a man could bring together such a collection again—the opportunity being gone—or that there would again be such a man—the mold being broken.

John Shapley

JOSEPH V. McMULLAN, born in New York in 1896, was educated in his native city, and died there on June 2, 1973. A Trustee since 1948, he has been an enthusiastic benefactor of the Textile Museum, a most generous donor to the Museum's collection of Oriental rugs, and a frequent lecturer in its galleries.

Mr. McMullan's interest in the culture of the Islamic world was aroused early in his career and led to the acquisition of the first important rug that began his collection about 1930. Ever since, he had been active as a collector of Islamic rugs and as a patron of Islamic studies and collections in America. He was one of the founding members of the Iran-America Society and, with Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, who was then with the Freer Gallery of Art, acted as official host to the Shah and the Empress of Iran on the occasion of their visit to the Textile Museum in 1964.

Sections of the McMullan rug collection have been shown at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Fogg Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Textile Museum, Toledo Museum of Art, and in Lahore and Carachi, Pakistan. A select group of 100 of the rugs was displayed at the Textile Museum in 1965, accompanied by the comprehensive superbly illustrated in color volume—*Islamic Carpets*—written by Mr. McMullan about his collection. At the close of this exhibition, 50 of these rugs were circulated by the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service throughout the United States for a period of two years.

An exhibition of 127 carpets (from the McMullan collection and of those rugs given by him to the Textile Museum and several other museums) was organized by the Arts

Council of Great Britain for a late 1972 showing at the Hayward Gallery in London. After this London display, it was Mr. McMullan's intention to present, as gifts, the balance of his rugs to various museums.

In his introduction to *Islamic Carpets*,¹ the former Curator of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ernst J. Grube, wrote in part the following:

The Joseph V. McMullan Collection of Islamic Carpets contains an effort of a lifetime, the result of a uniquely gifted man's intense preoccupation with collecting and preserving fine carpets, not so much of the well-known 'classical' types, but of the nomad and village rugs of the 18th and 19th centuries to which not too much attention has been paid by scholars and collectors. This...book is the presentation by the collector himself of the finest collection of Islamic rugs that has ever been assembled in private hands.... The notes in Mr. McMullan's book are guides to observing and appreciating rugs and they are at the same time revealing the reasons and motifs that led the collector to acquire a given piece and keep it in his collection....

...Concentrating on Caucasian and Anatolian rugs of a truly great heritage, Mr. McMullan has produced a collection that, far beyond its beauty, is of the greatest historical interest.... The McMullan collection in its large variety of types and patterns must be considered of greatest importance for the history of the Islamic rug. In this collection a wealth of information has been assembled through preserved specimens of an art form, closer than any other connected with the basic concepts of Islamic thought on the infinity of all true being and on the nothingness of all temporary existence, that makes it truly great and valuable far beyond its immediate beauty and appeal....

¹Joseph V. McMullan, *Islamic Carpets* (printed in Germany and copyrighted by Near Eastern Art Research Center, Inc. of New York City, 1965).



The Textile Museum's main gallery during Masterpieces of Iranian Rugs and Textiles Exhibition (June-Sept. 1964) in which the large early 16th century Northern Persian medallion carpet (left) was displayed. This was a 1960 gift from Mr. McMullan in memory of George Hewitt Myers, founder of the Textile Museum. Photograph by Lt. Col. Osmund L. Varela.



Dr. Leonard Carmichael. Courtesy of the National Geographic Society.

LEONARD CARMICHAEL (1898-1973)
Trustee of the Textile Museum 1954-1971
Vice President 1964-1971

Lector, si monumentum requiris circumspice (which may be freely rendered, "Reader, if you are looking for his memorial gaze about you") is the famous inscription for Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's Cathedral at London, and it would be equally appropriate for Leonard Carmichael on the Mall at Washington. For here are to be seen the great building projects he brought into being as seventh Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution—its Museum of History and Technology and the two large wings added to its Museum of Natural History—while nearby is the old Patent Office building that he acquired to house the National Collection of Art and the National Portrait Gallery. Of the stature of the man these buildings, along with the many installations inside them, offer a monumental image.

During World War II, while he was President of Tufts College, his *alma mater*, he already laid, as director of the national roster of scientific and specialized personnel, the foundation of an unequalled range of contacts throughout the world of learning, and he built on this during succeeding years to construct a huge edifice of scholarly comradeship and interchange. Hence there are all the more now to miss and mourn him. As a builder both of buildings and institutions, he was indefatigable. Even after the time of his normal retirement from the Smithsonian Institution he went right on to the end as the vice president for research and exploration at the National Geographic Society.

It was consonant with his bent for the determinate and the concrete that his studies in psychology should be pursued on a material physiological basis, and that he should occupy himself with electroencephalography and the functions of the sense organs. In turn it was the solid background in practical psychology that uniquely equipped him for the life of practical public service that his was to be. Some of us who have Carmichael blood, even though it is concealed by our scheme of patriarchal naming, cannot help taking a kind of clannish pride at the evidence he gave of its strain of practicality. For whether in laboratory or hall of learning, whether in executive direction of committee, college, or other institution, Leonard Carmichael had the seemingly simple, yet, in fact, extremely elusive and rare, talent for calmly and naturally doing the right thing at the right time. His methods were as inconspicuous as his results were conspicuous.

It was not only the big things that he thought of and did; he thought of and attended to the little things as well. It was astonishing how, despite the pressure of great responsibilities and their urgent demands upon him, he could manage to get around to the minor obligations of life. Indeed, a sense of duty, with its accompanying call for the sacrifice of personal desire, convenience, comfort, even safety perhaps, was an integral part of his nature. He was ever on hand at any juncture asking for his presence. He was always ready to assume and carry cheerfully whatever responsibility fell to his lot: consequently the bewildering number of offices in scholarly organizations, and the like, that he willingly filled, and filled with distinction.

Fortunately these many meritorious services on his part did not pass unnoticed on the part of others, and did not remain unrewarded. The large number of honorary degrees and of other awards he received is only one indication of this wide appreciation. The unpublicized gratitude toward him of those making up the world in which he moved was a far more true index of his standing. Among all the honors rained upon him there was one that seems peculiarly appropriate, the Hartley medal of the National Academy of Sciences for "eminence in the application of science to the public welfare." For public welfare was assuredly the star to which he had hitched his wagon.

The effect of Leonard Carmichael's death, coming, as it has, so soon after that of another beloved trustee, is such as to cause one connected with the Textile Museum, however frail the bond, to turn back again to read a famous Persian poem. It was written after a similar twofold bereavement by the greatest of the Indo-Persian poets, Amir Khusraw of Delhi, and begins with the line:

A double radiance left my star this year
 and ends, as does this, with the lines:

Whene'er those lips of thine to speech were stirred
 Ever to my advantage was thy word.
 Today thy silence makes its dumb appeal,
 And lo, my lips are closed as with a seal.

John Shapley

EXCERPT FROM A TALK GIVEN BY PRESIDENT JOHN RAMSEY PUCH DURING THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE TEXTILE MUSEUM ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1973

It is appropriate at this time to pay tribute to Dr. Leonard Carmichael, Trustee Emeritus, and Joseph V. McMullan, Trustee, both of whom departed this life since our last meeting. Both were personal friends of the Textile Museum's Founder and were chosen by him as Trustees. Both of these superstars gave freely of their vast knowledge and helped to give the Museum the status it has today. Their shoes will be difficult to fill. Their names are household words in the field of art. Biographies of these two men would consume all of the time available to us today. Mention the Smithsonian Institution, the National Geographic Society, the American Philosophical Society, and the finest collection of Islamic rugs ever assembled in private hands, and we return to Dr. Carmichael and Mr. McMullan.

It was a pleasure for me to observe their minds at work. Both had magnificent senses of humor, remarkable intellects, and the courage of their own convictions. I have always felt that men and women of letters leave a pool of knowledge which will be drawn upon by generations to come. Such minds must not be lost to this world. In the case of Dr. Carmichael and Mr. McMullan our future generations will be made richer by their having lived. I should like the Board's approval by acclamation to have Mr. McMullan join Dr. Carmichael as Trustee Emeritus.



Lt. Col. Osmund Leonard Varela. Courtesy of Mrs. Mary T. Varela.

**OSMUND LEONARD VARELA (1891-1973)
Staff Photographer of the Textile Museum 1961-1972**

This year the Textile Museum has been saddened by the irreparable loss through death of three of its staunch and splendid people: Trustees Mr. McMullan and Dr. Carmichael, and later Staff Photographer Colonel Varela.

Lt. Col. Osmund Leonard Varela, a native of the District of Columbia, after graduating from the first flight school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, attended a pilots' school in France. He was a pilot and aerial photographer in France during World War I. After the war, he became assistant treasurer of the National Savings and Trust Company in Washington, D.C. He remained in the reserves, and in World War II served as a fiscal officer in the Army Chemical Corps. He came by his photographic profession quite naturally. His chemist father invented one of the first dry-plates used in this country, and his brother was chief photographer for the United States Forestry Service. Although Col. Varela followed the banking profession in his civilian life, he kept up an active interest in photography. After retiring in 1948, he opened his own professional photography studio, and joined the Textile Museum in 1961. The Museum staff soon discovered that Col. Varela was no ordinary camera man. He enjoyed matching his wits and ingenuity against each difficult problem encountered in his work in making hundreds of record photographs of the various rugs and textiles in the Museum collections, and also of the numerous exhibition installations in its galleries. When

a proper camera to do some intricate work was not available, he built one. The four cameras used to record the Museum's textiles were constructed by him.

He was an irrepresible raconteur of stories about his varied activities and travels. One of several nephews of John Philip Sousa, the Colonel was proud of his heritage and was fond of recalling summers at Uncle John's home in New York where family gatherings were held annually. His own home was filled with mementos of a long and active life and of the friends he gathered.

A man of compassion, concern, charm and insight, Col. Varela leaves a legacy of good will and pleasant memories among his colleagues at the Museum.